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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship of satisfaction with the perceived level of organizational support for families and overall satisfaction with military life among civilian spouses of Army members. The report is based on an analysis of the responses of 2,814 Army spouses of the 1985 Department of Defense Survey of Military Spouses. The relationship of satisfaction with perceived organizational support for families to overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life was analyzed for four categories of Army spouses: spouses without children married to enlisted members; spouses with children married to enlisted members; spouses without children married to officers; and spouses with children married to officers. The findings strongly suggested the presence of a positive and significant relationship between overall satisfaction with the perceived organizational support for families and overall level of satisfaction with the military as a way of life. This relationship held across all four categories of respondents, even when selected subdomains of satisfaction pertinent to the military way of life were held constant. Rather than showing a uniform pattern across the four subgroups of respondents, the independent variable explained a greater proportion of the variance in the dependent variable for civilian spouses of officers with children than for the other groups. (Author/ABL)

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Technical Report 874

# The Relationship Between the Perceived Level of Organizational Support for Families and Spouse Satisfaction with Military Life

**Gary L. Bowen and Peter A. Neenan**
School of Social Work
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**February 1990**

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This research supports The Army Family Action Plans (1984-1989) by examining the relationship of satisfaction with the perceived level of organizational support for families and overall satisfaction with military life among civilian spouses of Army members.

The report is based on an analysis of the responses of 2,814 Army spouses to the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses. The relationship of satisfaction with perceived organizational support for families to overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life was analyzed for four categories of Army spouses: (a) spouses without children married to enlisted members, (b) spouses with children married to enlisted members, (c) spouses without children married to officers, and (d) spouses with children married to officers. To assess the unique contribution of the independent variable to overall civilian spouse satisfaction with the military way of life, fifteen subdomains of satisfaction relating to the military

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19. ABSTRACT (Continued)

way of life were used as control variables, as were the gender of respondent and pay grade of the military spouse.

The findings strongly suggest the presence of a positive and significant relationship between satisfaction with the perceived organizational support for families and overall level of satisfaction with the military as a way of life. This relationship holds across all four categories of respondents, even when selected subdomains of satisfaction pertinent to the military way of life are held constant.

Rather than showing a uniform pattern across the four subgroups of respondents, the independent variable explained a greater proportion of the variance in the dependent variable for civilian spouses of officers with children than for the other groups.

This report presents a preliminary analysis aimed at developing hypotheses that will be tested in the analyses of the data set to be developed in the large data collection effort by the Army Family Research Program (AFRP). The Army sponsor for this effort, the Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC), reviewed and approved an earlier draft of this report. Their comments indicate that the contents of this report will be useful in revising Army programs and policies.

Technical Report 874

# The Relationship Between the Perceived Level of Organizational Support for Families and Spouse Satisfaction with Military Life

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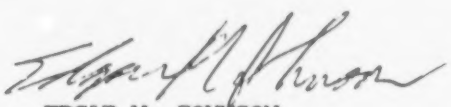
The Army Family Research Program (AFRP) is a five-year integrated research program started in November 1986 in response to research mandated by the CSA White Paper, 1983: The Army Family and subsequently by The Army Family Action Plans (1984-1989). The objective of the research is to support the Army Family Action Plans through research products that will (1) determine the demographic characteristics of Army families, (2) identify positive motivators and negative detractors to soldiers remaining in the Army, (3) develop pilot programs to improve family adaptation to Army life, and (4) increase operational readiness.

The research is being conducted by the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) with assistance from Research Triangle Institute, Caliber Associates, HumRRO, and the University of North Carolina. It is funded by Army research and development funds that were set aside for this purpose under Management Decision Package (1U6S).

This report presents the results of a preliminary analysis of the relationship of perceived level of organizational support for families and satisfaction with the military way of life among civilian spouses of Army members. This preliminary analysis was aimed at developing hypotheses that will be tested in the analyses of the data set to be developed in the large data collection effort by the Army Family Research Program (AFRP). The Army sponsor for this effort, the Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC), reviewed and approved an earlier draft of this report. Their comments indicate that the contents of this report will be useful in revising Army programs and policies.



EDGAR M. JOHNSON
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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERCEIVED LEVEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND SPOUSE SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


Requirement:

To support The Army Family Action Plans (1984-1989) by examining the relationship between satisfaction with the perceived level of organizational support for families and their problems to overall satisfaction with military life among civilian spouses of Army members.

Procedure:

The report is based on the responses of 2,814 Army spouses to the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses. The relationship of satisfaction with the perceived organizational support for families and their problems to overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life is analyzed for four categories of Army spouses: (a) spouses without children married to enlisted members, (b) spouses with children married to enlisted members, (c) spouses without children married to officers, and (d) spouses with children married to officers. To assess the unique contribution of the independent variable to overall civilian spouse satisfaction with the military way of life, fifteen subdomains of satisfaction concerning issues related to the military way of life were used as control variables, as were the gender of respondent and pay grade of the military spouse.

Findings:

The findings strongly suggest the presence of a positive and significant relationship between satisfaction with the perceived organizational support for families and family problems and overall level of satisfaction with the military as a way of life. This relationship holds across all four categories of respondents, even when selected subdomains of satisfaction pertinent to the military way of life are held constant.

However, rather than having a uniform effect across the four subgroups of respondents, the independent variable explained a greater proportion of the variance in the dependent variable for civilian spouses of officers with children than for the other respondent groups.

Utilization of Findings:

This report presents the results of a preliminary analysis aimed at developing hypotheses that will be tested in the analyses of the data set to be developed in the large data collection effort by the Army Family Research Program (AFRP). The Army sponsor for this effort, the Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC), reviewed and approved an earlier draft of this report. Their comments indicate that the contents of this report will be useful in revising Army programs and policies.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERCEIVED LEVEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND SPOUSE SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PERCEIVED LEVEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND SPOUSE SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE

## Introduction

"We recruit soldiers, but we retain families." With these words, a former Army Chief of Staff, General E. C. Meyer, succinctly demonstrated the growing recognition by Army leadership that family concerns play a critical role in member retention and readiness in the Army of the eighties (Meyer, 1983). Changes in the organizational context in which the Army functions have inevitably fostered this recognition. Perhaps foremost among these transformations has been the gradual evolution of the personnel composition of the Army from a predominantly single population to a predominantly married force since the end of World War II (Segal, 1986).

Not only is there a higher proportion of members with family responsibilities in the Army today, especially in the middle and upper enlisted and officer ranks, but the family patterns, values, and work orientations of these members and their families have changed dramatically in recent years. Contemporary trends in marriage, divorce, single parenthood, dual career patterns, and voluntary childlessness are all reflected in Army families today (Bowen & Scheirer, 1986). Army families also experience many of the same pressures as other American families, such as inadequate family finances, changing definitions of the roles of husband and wife, new definitions of parental responsibilities, and lack of viable informal support systems (Hunter, 1982; McCubbin, Patterson, & Lavee, 1983; Orthner & Bowen, 1982).

The changing structure and composition of the Army have created a need for expanded support programs and services, such as child care, recreational services, relocation assistance, job counseling, and family support services. In response, the number of new and expanded support services and programs in the Army has increased dramatically over the past five years (Bowen & Scheirer, 1986). This expansion of social support mechanisms for service-members and their families has resulted in a sizable increase in the number of new job opportunities for both military and civilian human service practitioners.

The development and expansion of support mechanisms for families are intended to help Army members and their families better adapt to the demands of military life as well as to promote the quality of family life in the Army. It is often assumed by Army leadership that if families receive the necessary support, they will reciprocate this support in the form of increased support for the member's career (Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, 1983).

In a recent evaluation of Family Support Centers in the U.S. Air Force, Bowen and his associates (Bowen, 1984; McGoughey & Bowen, 1984; Orthner, Bowen, & Boyd, 1982; Orthner & Pittman, 1986) found that support mechanisms for families in a military community had broad impact on the level of family adaptation to organizational demands as well as on the level of satisfaction of families with military life. These support mechanisms positively

influenced families both targeted for intervention as well as those not targeted, and their influence extended to nonusers as well as users of support programs and services. Military policies, practices and programs in support of families were found to have a "symbolic" as well as a "real" influence on family adaptation and satisfaction. In other words, family members often reported that efforts by the organization in support of family life not only provided tangible assistance in coping with the duality of organizational and family demands, but also demonstrated a recognition and concern by the organization for families and family problems which promoted a sense of mutuality and cooperation between the organization and its families.

Drawing on secondary analysis of the 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses, this investigation was an extension of the earlier work of Bowen and his associates. It examines the relationship between the perceived level of organizational support for families and their problems and satisfaction with the military way of life among civilian spouses of Army members. This relationship was analyzed not only in the context of a range of other quality-of-military-life satisfiers, but also examined separately for spouses of enlisted members and spouses of officers both with and without children in the household. As recently concluded by Bowen (1989) based largely on the work of Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976), as well as the work of Seashore and Taber (1976), such a multivariate approach

> ... has greater implications for policy and program planners than would a simple bivariate analysis. Faced with the challenge of promoting the quality of life for soldiers and their families in the context of resource constraints, planners must often decide among competing intervention alternatives. A multivariate analysis strategy provides more detailed information for making such decisions. (Bowen, 1989, p. 574)

Based on the findings by Bowen and his associates, as well as on current family-oriented policy and program assumptions espoused by senior Army leadership (Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, 1983), it was hypothesized here that the more satisfied the civilian spouses were with the organizational support for families and family problems, the greater their overall satisfaction with the military way of life. Because of the lack of comparative research regarding this hypothesis across population subgroups in the military, it was also predicted that the relative influence of satisfaction with the service's support for families and family problems on the level of overall satisfaction would be equally strong across population subgroups.

Given the established links among satisfaction with the military lifestyle, spouse support for the member's career, and the retention and readiness of military members (Bowen, 1986; Bowen & Janofsky, 1988; Pittman & Orthner, 1988), it is critical to understand better the factors that enhance the satisfaction of spouses with the military way of life. Although a link between the satisfaction of spouses with the organizational support of families and family problems and their level of overall satisfaction seems intuitively obvious, it has not received sufficient empirical testing. In view of the increased emphasis on program accountability in the military services coupled with anticipated cutbacks in military budgets for funding family support programs and services, it becomes increasingly important to

quantify the assumptions that provide the foundation for family-oriented policy and program development.

Paralleling the situation in the civilian sector (Bowen, 1988; Yamatani, 1988), additional research is needed which demonstrates how the costs associated with expanded family-oriented policies and practices in support of employees and their families are balanced by gains for the employing organization. This is especially the case in the military services where some of the recently developed programs and services in support of service-members and their families are operating on an experimental basis, awaiting evidence that supports the assumptions behind their continuation and expansion.

## Method

### Source of Data

The data for this analysis are based on a stratified random sample of 11,943 civilian spouses of active-duty officers and enlisted personnel serving in the U.S. Army in the United States or overseas on September 30, 1984. The 1985 DoD Survey of Military Spouses was conducted contingent upon the stratified sampling strategy employed in the 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel. These surveys, which also included members and spouses from the Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps, were conducted for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC).

The sampling objective of the Spouse Survey was to provide a census rather than a sample of all spouses (both military and civilian) married to individuals selected for the 1985 DoD Member Survey. From the Army member sub-sample, a total of 28,217 spouses were so identified and selected for the Army component of the Spouse Survey. However, a total of 3,849 spouses originally selected to participate in the Army portion of the survey were eventually excluded from the eligible sample because either the member spouse had separated from the service or they had become divorced.

Where possible, questionnaire packets were mailed directly to the home addresses of spouses by the survey contractor. In those cases where it was not possible to locate a home address for a spouse, packets for spouses were mailed in care of military members. Following the administrative procedures of the 1985 DoD Member Survey, a follow-up letter was distributed two weeks after initial questionnaire distribution. After several weeks, a second questionnaire packet was forwarded to spouses who had not returned the survey.

Among eligible sample spouses ($N$ = 24,368), the overall Army response rate was 44.5% for spouses of enlisted members ($n$ = 8,493) and 65.3% for spouses of officer personnel ($n$ = 3,450). For a more comprehensive description of the design and implementation of the 1985 DoD Survey, the reader should consult both the Description of Officers and Enlisted Personnel in the U.S. Armed Forces: Volume 1 (Defense Manpower Data Center, 1986a) and the 1985 Survey of Military Spouses: User's Manual and Codebook (Defense Manpower Data Center, 1986b).

Only civilian spouses who were married to either enlisted or officer Army personnel and who had no prior military service were included in the analysis. As a consequence of these sample restrictions, some 2,354 spouses were deleted from the analysis, making a total of 9,589 cases potentially available for analysis.

For purposes of analysis, respondents were divided into two subgroups based on the presence of dependent children (i.e., no children, one or more children). For civilian spouses with no dependent children, all 1,625 cases were used in the analysis. However, given the imbalance in sample size between civilian spouses with ($n$ = 7,964) and without dependent children ($n$ = 1,625), a random sub-sample was drawn from the larger sub-file ($n$ = 1,306) to make the size of sub-files more comparable across groups. The two sub-files (i.e., no children, children) were subsequently divided into officer and enlisted sub-files, creating four distinct subgroups for purposes of analysis: (a) spouses of enlisted personnel with no children ($n$ = 1,024), (b) spouses of enlisted personnel with children ($n$ = 920), (c) spouses of officers with no children ($n$ = 536), and spouses of officers with children ($n$ = 334). Table 1 presents demographic profiles of the sample subgroups (Total $N$ = 2,814).

Measurement of Variables

The dependent variable, satisfaction with the military as a way of life, was assessed by a single item. Respondents rated their level of satisfaction on a seven point Likert-type scale ranging from "1" for "very dissatisfied" to "7" for "very satisfied."

The independent variable, satisfaction with the service's support of families and family problems, was also assessed by a single item. Implicit in the wording of this item, "Service's attitude toward families and their problems" (Appendix A) is the concept of the service's or organizational support. Respondents rated their level of satisfaction on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from "1" for "very satisfied" to "5" for "very dissatisfied." Respondents could respond that they had "no prior experience."

Seventeen control variables were also included in the analysis in an attempt to isolate the unique variance accounted for in the dependent variable by the independent variable, perception of the service's support of families and family problems. Fifteen of these control variables were single-item measures of satisfaction with specific issues of the military way of life which included military pay and allowances, rights of civilian spouses, and family separations. A complete list of these items is shown in Appendix A. As for the independent variable, respondents were asked to evaluate their level of satisfaction with each of these issues on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from "1" for "very satisfied" to "5" for "very dissatisfied." As in the case of the independent variable, respondents could respond that they had "no prior experience."

Two additional control variables were also included in the analysis based on their association with the independent and dependent variables in prior research: gender of the spouse and pay grade of the member spouse (Bowen, 1986; Orthner & Bowen, 1982; Szoc, 1982). On the survey, respondents were

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Sample Spouses

| Characteristics | Enlisted | | Officer | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No Children (n = 1,024) | Children (n = 920) | No Children (n = 536) | Children (n = 334) |
| Female | 95.1% | 87.7% | 94.4% | 93.7% |
| Mean age | 29.3 | 30.4 | 32.4 | 34.6 |
| Race/ethnic group | | | | |
| Black | 18.6% | 22.8% | 7.5% | 6.0% |
| White | 60.2% | 59.2% | 85.7% | 89.5% |
| Other | 21.2% | 18.0% | 6.8% | 4.5% |
| Rank/pay grade | | | | |
| E-1 to E-4 | 24.1% | 14.0% | -- | -- |
| E-5 to E-6 | 51.8% | 53.1% | -- | -- |
| E-7 to E-9 | 24.1% | 32.8% | -- | -- |
| O-1 to O-3 | -- | -- | 63.1% | 42.2% |
| O-4 to O-6 | -- | -- | 36.9% | 57.8% |
| First marriage | 79.7% | 73.3% | 88.6% | 85.3% |
| Mean years married | 6.3 | 8.0 | 8.6 | 11.5 |
| Mean number of children in household | -- | 2.3 | -- | 2.2 |
| Mean age of youngest child--years | -- | 4.9 | -- | 5.8 |
| Employed | 48.5% | 38.3% | 59.3% | 41.7% |

asked to specify their gender (i.e., male or female), as well as to indicate the pay grade of their member spouse (i.e., Enlisted: E-1 to E-9; Officer: O-1 to O-6).

Data Analysis

Assuming a linear and recursive system, the systems regression (SYSREG) procedure in the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) (SAS Institute, Inc., 1982) was used to run four separate models using ordinary least squares. A listwise deletion of cases with missing data was used.

The regression analysis was designed to estimate the unique contribution of the independent variable to the level of spouse satisfaction with the military as a way of life. Thus, the estimated parameter within subgroups is the unique effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable controlling for all other variables in the model. A probability level of less than .05 ($p < .05$) was used to determine statistical significance.

In the analysis, gender was coded as a dummy variable with female as the reference category. The pay grade of the member within rank sub-files was entered as a linear variable. Because of inverse scale directionality of the dependent variable with the independent variable, as well as with the additional control variables noted above, these variables were recoded to parallel the scale directionality of the dependent variable: "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied."

## Results

Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations between the independent variable as well as the additional 15 quality-of-military-life control variables and the dependent variable by sample sub-group. The size of the zero-order correlation coefficients between the independent variable and the dependent variable across sample sub-groups in the analysis ranged from a low of .37 for enlisted spouses with children to a high of .60 for officer spouses with children.

As a precursor to the regression analysis, a series of t-tests were performed to examine mean differences among the groups on the dependent and independent variables in the analyses. A $p < .05$ level of probability was used to determine statistical significance.

In comparing the frequency distributions of the dependent variable by subgroup, officer spouses both without children ($M = 4.9$; $SD = 1.6$) and with children ($M = 4.8$; $SD = 1.6$) reported significantly higher mean levels of satisfaction with the military as a way of life than corresponding categories of enlisted spouses ($M = 4.5$; $SD = 1.6$ and $M = 4.5$; $SD = 1.7$ respectively). Table 3 presents the results of these analyses. Within the officer and enlisted spouse categories, there were no significant differences between spouses without and with children in their level of expressed satisfaction ($p > .05$). Given that the dependent variable was measured on a seven-point satisfaction scale from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied," it appears

Table 2

Correlations Between the Quality-of-Military-Life Indicators and the Dependent Variable: Satisfaction with the Military as a Way of Life

| Satisfaction with: | Enlisted | | Officer | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No Children (n = 871) | Children (n= 789) | No Children (n = 486) | Children (n = 294) |
| Military housing | .315 | .331 | .241 | .358 |
| Military pay and allowances | .459 | .343 | .364 | .371 |
| Military job security | .317 | .281 | .241 | .310 |
| Retirement benefits | .266 | .299 | .187 | .217 |
| Promotion opportunities | .315 | .303 | .246 | .386 |
| Rights of civilian spouses | .378 | .330 | .410 | .459 |
| Demands on civilian spouses | .399 | .369 | .422 | .525 |
| Family separations | .328 | .333 | .309 | .448 |
| Moves | .343 | .338 | .340 | .377 |
| Dental care | .163 | .225 | .151 | .211 |
| Medical care | .330 | .226 | .293 | .323 |
| Environment for families | .386 | .324 | .421 | .454 |
| Education opportunities for civilian spouses | .313 | .234 | .294 | .286 |
| Service attitude toward military families* | .429 | .370 | .412 | .602 |
| Time available for military spouse to spend with family | .427 | .405 | .336 | .372 |
| Job opportunities/employment for civilian spouse | .244 | .173 | .266 | .295 |

Note. All zero-order correlations are significant at .001 level.

*Independent variable.

Table 3

Overall Satisfaction with the Military Way of Life by Four Sample Groups: Means, Standard Deviations, and *t*-Tests for Differences Between Enlisted and Officer Spouse by the Presence of Children in the Household

| | Pay Grade of Member Spouse | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Enlisted | | Officer | | |
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *t*-Test |
| No children | 4.5 | 1.6 | 4.9 | 1.6 | $t(1,558) = 4.60^{**}$ |
| Children | 4.5 | 1.7 | 4.8 | 1.6 | $t(1,252) = 2.97^{**}$ |
| *t*-Test | $t(1,943) = 0.0$ | | $t\ (868) = 0.89$ | | |

** $p < .01$

that spouses were generally more satisfied than dissatisfied with the military as a way of life.

When the frequency distributions of the independent variable were compared by subgroup, spouses reported similar levels of satisfaction with the perceived service's support of families and family problems ($p > .05$): enlisted spouses without children ($M = 1.9$; $SD = 1.1$); enlisted spouses with children ($M = 1.8$; $SD = 1.1$); officer spouses without children ($M = 1.9$; $SD = 1.1$); and officer spouses with children ($M = 1.8$; $SD = 1.0$). Given that the independent variable was measured on five-point satisfaction scale and recoded from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied," it appears that spouses were generally more dissatisfied than satisfied with the perceived organizational support for families and family problems.

As hypothesized, even after the variance from the control variables was removed from the model, the level of satisfaction with perceived organizational support of families and family problems was positively and significantly related ($p < .05$) to the level of over-all satisfaction with the military way of life across sample subgroups. The unstandardized regression coefficients ($b$) and the standardized regression coefficients (Beta) were: (a) enlisted spouses without children ($b = .17$; Beta =.12), $t(869) = 3.07$; (b) enlisted spouses with children ($b = .13$; Beta = .08), $t(787) = 2.15$; officer spouses without children ($b = .18$; Beta = .12), $t(484) = 2.12$; and (d) officer spouses with children ($b = .48$; Beta = .30), $t(292) = 5.22$. However, although there was no empirical basis for predicting variation in the magnitude of this relationship by subgroup, the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable was not equally strong across sample subgroups. Comparing the unstandardized regression coefficients[1] across the sample subgroups, the magnitude of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable was approximately three times greater for officer spouses with children as compared to the other three subgroups. This finding suggests that the overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life among officer spouses with children may be particularly influenced by their perception of the level of organizational support for families and family problems.

## Conclusions and Discussion

This investigation has probed the degree to which the perceived level of organizational support for families and family problems contributes to the level of overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life among civilian spouses of Army members. As was noted earlier, prior research has suggested that not only do specific programs designed to support family life in the military promote the level of adaptation by families to organizational demands as well as enhance their satisfaction with military life, but also the perception by families that the military is concerned for their well being

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[1]For purposes of comparing the effect of a given variable across sample subgroups, the use of unstandardized coefficients is preferred over the use of standardized coefficients because of their greater stability in different populations (Pedhazur, 1982, p. 250).

plays a critical role in promoting these outcomes as well. Based on this research with Air Force families, it was hypothesized that the level of satisfaction among Army spouses with the military as a way of life is positively related to their perception of the service's support for families and family problems.

The results provided support for this hypothesis. Examined not only in the context of a range of other quality-of-life satisfiers, but also separately for spouses of enlisted members and officers both with and without children in the household, the perception of civilian spouses of the service's support of families and family problems was positively and significantly associated with overall satisfaction with the military as a way of life. The relationship was substantiated for all four categories of civilian spouse respondents: those without children married to enlisted personnel; those with children married to enlisted personnel, those without children married to officers, and those with children married to officers.

However, while this relationship held across all sub-groups of civilian spouses, it was particularly pronounced for those spouses with children who were married to officers. This finding suggests that the level of satisfaction that officer spouses with children have with the military as a way of life may be especially affected by military policies and practices that are supportive of family life.

In light of the accumulating body of evidence that spouse satisfaction with the military as a way of life contributes to member retention and readiness through increased spouse support for the member's career (Bowen, 1986; Bowen & Janofsky, 1988; Pittman & Orthner, 1988), the present findings should be particularly interesting to Army community and family support personnel who must continually defend family support efforts with facts rather than assumptions. These findings clearly imply that Army policies and practices that are interpreted by spouses as representing a concern by the institution for families and family problems are likely to contribute toward military-related outcomes based on established linkages among spouse satisfaction with military life, spouse support for the member's career, and member retention and readiness.

Given the significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variable across sub-groups in the present analysis, it is particularly noteworthy that all four groups of civilian spouses generally has a poorer perception of the service's support of families and family problems. In combination, these findings suggest that military policy and program specialists should carefully monitor and build their continuing efforts in support of service-members and their families through an ongoing program of community needs assessment and program evaluation.

Special attention should be directed at assessing family members' perceptions about the motivational basis of family-oriented initiatives. The significance of an initiative on behalf of families may not only depend on the perceptions of families about whether the military should assume responsibility for the issue in question, but also on their beliefs about the actual motives of leadership in providing needed supports and resources

(Bowen, 1988). The perceptions of those who believe that military leadership is motivated by a genuine concern for their well-being are likely to feel more positive about the service's support of families and family problems than those who see the actions of leadership as arising from a concern only with the "bottom line" (i.e., retention and readiness outcomes), a paternalistic attitude, or a desire to gain firmer control over service-members and their family lives.

Further research should be directed toward examining the indirect as well as the direct effects of perception of organizational support of families and family problems on the level of spouse satisfaction with the military as a way of life. It is also suggested that the present analysis be duplicated across the other service branches included in the 1985 DoD Survey of Officer and Enlisted Personnel, as well as be examined for generalizability within civilian organizations.

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# APPENDIX A

## SURVEY ITEMS

Survey Items

Quality-of-Military-Life Indicators and Satisfaction with the Military Way of Life.

Below is a list of issues particular to a military way of life. Considering current policies, please indicate your level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with each issue.

| | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Military housing | o | o | o | o | o |
| Military pay and allowances | o | o | o | o | o |
| Military job security | o | o | o | o | o |
| Military retirement benefits | o | o | o | o | o |
| Military promotion opportunities | o | o | o | o | o |
| Rights of civilian spouses | o | o | o | o | o |
| Levels of demand on civilian spouses | o | o | o | o | o |
| Family separations | o | o | o | o | o |
| PCS moves | o | o | o | o | o |
| Dental care | o | o | o | o | o |
| Medical care | o | o | o | o | o |
| Environment for families | o | o | o | o | o |
| Opportunities for education/training for civilian spouses | o | o | o | o | o |
| Service attitude toward families and family problems | o | o | o | o | o |
| Time available for civilian spouses to spend with family | o | o | o | o | o |
| Availability of job opportunities/ employment for civilian spouses | o | o | o | o | o |

Now, taking all things together, how satisfied are you with the military as a way of life?

o Very Dissatisfied
o Dissatisfied
o Somewhat Dissatisfied
o Neither Dissatisfied Nor Satisfied
o Somewhat Satisfied
o Satisfied
o Very Satisfied

A-2